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REFLECTIONS
ON
THE BOOK OF RUTH,
affectionately addressed to
PERSONS IN YOUNGER LIFE.

By J. A. KNIGHT.

THE SECOND EDITION.

He taketh the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy
out of the dunghill: that he may set him with princes,
even with the princes of his people.

Psa. cxlii. 7, 8.

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REFLECTIONS, &c.



WHEN the voice of a father and a friend invites your attention, you will not, I trust, refuse to listen for a few moments to his counsel, and such he is, who now addresses you. Impressed with a sincere regard for the rising generation, and anxious that they may escape those snares and dangers, into which the sin and folly of his own heart, and the inexperience of youth have betrayed him in early life, he can need no apology for his motive; and, as it is his desire to direct you to the infallible word of God, he cannot possibly need any for the subject. Should he be so happy as, by the divine blessing, to engage your hearts to a serious concern for your own happiness,

his end will be gained, and the giver of every good and perfect gift shall have all the praise.

Among the many affecting proofs of the depravity of the day in which we live, notwithstanding the boasted effects of reason and science, the too general neglect and contempt with which the Oracles of heaven are treated, is one of the most awful and alarming; and while the most absurd and abominable fabrications of men of corrupt minds, which are only calculated to poison and pervert the minds of youth, are eagerly read, the Sacred Volume lies neglected on the shelf, forgotten as a tale that is told; yet, who that is blest with a relish for its glorious truths, will for a moment hesitate to say with a late eminent person,* that, “independant of its divine origin, it contains more sublimity, more pure

* Sir WILLIAM JONES, one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Bengal, who died about three years ago.

morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been composed."

My young friends are not ignorant that in the concerns of the present life, we esteem it a duty to recommend to others, what upon trial we have found useful and beneficial to ourselves; they will therefore, on the same principle, allow me to offer them a few plain remarks upon a portion of scripture which has often afforded instruction and comfort to my own soul; and as I hope to mingle prayer with what is written, may you be enabled to do the same while you read, and then I am persuaded, we shall not have to lament that our time has been unprofitably spent.

The passage to which I refer, is the History of Ruth, who, as we are informed, lived in the days when the people of Israel were under the

government of Judges, who were invested with a kind of sovereign authority, some being immediately called of God to the office, and others chosen by the people.

From the narrative which is given us in the Old Testament, it appears, that "Elimelech, a man of Bethlehem Judah, with his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, went to sojourn in the land of Moab: and Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons; and her sons took unto them wives of the women of Moab, the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also, and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband."

Can we proceed in the story without admiring the wise and wonderful subservience of the events of human life to the righteous purposes of God? Ruth was an object of the everlasting love of God, and

though a poor alien, born in an enemy's land (for the Moabites were an idolatrous and abominable people) yet in the Lord's own time and way his servants were sent to shew unto her the way of life and salvation. Should not this teach us to pity and pray for those who are yet without the light of his gospel, and gratefully to prize the privileges which are afforded us in such rich abundance? Learn also, what a blessing the people of God are to this world: our Saviour calls them "the light of the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation;" and such were Elimelech and his family in the land of Moab—such was Jacob in the house of Laban—Joseph in the house of Potiphar, and the court of Pharoah—the little Hebrew Maid in the family of Naaman, who directed him to the prophet, who instrumentally healed him of his leprosy—and such was Paul to the mariners and people with whom he sailed

towards Rome; for in answer to the apostle's prayer, the lives of two hundred and seventy-six persons were spared. Be it then your concern, whatever is your station in life, to prove a comfort and a blessing to all around you.

But you will probably be anxious to know what it was that induced Ruth to leave her native country; we shall now attend to that circumstance. From this part of her history it appears, that Elimelech and his family were driven by famine from their own land, to sojourn amongst the people of Moab: for Naomi (whose heart, like a true Israelite, was still with her own people,) no sooner heard that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread, than she determines to leave the idolatrous people amongst whom she had been so long compelled to dwell, and return to Bethlehem again. Her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, set out with her at her departure;

but at length Orpah, who appears to have had no gracious inducement to leave her gods and her nation, kissed her mother-in-law, and bid her a last adieu: while Ruth, like a faithful friend, formed for the winter of adversity, clave to the venerable matron, and said, " intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for where thou goest I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her; so they went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city were moved about them, and they said, is this Naomi?—(Broken as she had been with breach upon breach,

they could scarce believe her to be the same person)—“ And she said unto them, call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me, I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me. So Naomi returned, and Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem the beginning of barley harvest.”

Let us here pause and review the way which we have passed.—Alas! how incompetent are poor short-sighted mortals to judge of future events from present appearances. Who could have imagined from the circumstances under which Naomi and Ruth left the land of Moab, that afflictions so heavy and complicated were the appointed means of their advancement; or,

that the long dark night of their adversity would terminate in so bright a day of comfort and prosperity?—Say not then, reader, if thy path be trying, and providence appears to frown, that thy case admits of no remedy; but humbly seek the divine blessing in the way of duty, and thou shalt not wait in vain; for “all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.” What a lovely contrast does the conduct of Ruth towards her aged friend exhibit to that of Orpah, and how worthy the imitation of the daughters of Britain! The storm of affliction drove her but the nearer to her tender mother; and under such repeated strokes of adversity, a friend like Ruth, must be dearly valued, because greatly needed—Who is there but must be charmed and affected with her pious resolution, that “nought but death should part them!”—and shall death dissolve

a friendship which is cemented by divine grace? No! like its blessed Author, it shall reign through a boundless eternity—Let us prize so invaluable a blessing above thousands of gold and silver. But may we not in the conduct of Naomi discern the way in which we too often aggravate our trials, by poring on the difficulty, and forgetting the deliverer? Hence it was, that she said in the anguish of her spirit, “call me not Naomi (beautiful) but call me Mara (bitterness) for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” Yet though the rough, it was the right way to accomplish what infinite wisdom had determined on her behalf, as appears in the sequel of this instructive history.

We now enter upon the brighter part of the story. “Naomi (we are told) had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, let me now go to the field, and glean

ears of corn after him, in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, go, my daughter. And she went, and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light upon a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech."

What a beautiful picture of submission to adverse dispensations, is manifested in the conduct of Ruth! doubtless she had seen better days: but, considering it was the prerogative of God to humble or exalt, as seemeth good in his sight, and that honest industry is the ornament, and not the disgrace of any character, she cheerfully goes forth to gather up the ears of corn as they fell from the hands of the reapers, for the support of her aged mother.—Hath it pleased the Lord to bless my reader with the abundant gifts of his providence? mayest thou honor him with his own bestowments, gratefully sensible who

it is that hath made thee to differ from the poorest of men; and may "the blessing of many who were ready to perish come upon thee, and the widow's heart be made to sing with joy." If on the contrary, like Ruth, thou art humbled and brought low, be it thy chief concern to have Christ for thy portion, and in the end thou shalt say, "he hath done all things well."

That part of the history to which we are now brought, introduces a new character to our view, and well would it be, if in the higher circles of life many such as Boaz could be found: for he was not only a "mighty man of wealth," but, which is of far greater consequence, he was a man devoted to God: unlike too many rich oppressors, who grind the face of the poor, and are secretly execrated by those, who are compelled to earn their slender pittance under them: he was rather the father and friend, than the master of his people; the

labors of the day were begun with prayer, and the most sincere and mutual congratulations. "Behold, (saith the sacred historian) Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, the Lord be with you: and they answered him, the Lord bless thee." Truly happy are they, whose works of faith and labors of love, are thus begun, continued and ended in the Lord; for, while the curse of God is on the house and possessions of the wicked, he blesteth the habitation of the just, and that alone maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow.

On entering his field, it appears that Boaz was struck with the modest demeanour of the poor stranger, "and he said unto his servant that was set over his reapers, whose damsel is this? And the servant answered, it is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me gather after the reapers amongst the

sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go hence, but abide here by my maidens: let thine eyes be in the field that they do reap, and go after them: have I not charged the young men that they should not touch thee, and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, it hath been fully shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity,

and art come unto a people which thou knowest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." How amiable is the ornament of an humble and grateful spirit, and how often does it engage the kind regard of superiors in life! Encouraged by the attention of Boaz, and the success which attended her labor, Ruth joyfully returned to Naomi, and by her advice continued to glean in the fields of Boaz, until the end of the barley harvest.

In order that my young friends may more clearly understand the remaining part of the history, it is necessary to inform them of the obligations, which by the law in those days, were laid upon the near kinsman—In the next of kin was the right of redemption, when an inheritance had been mortgaged, and if able, he was to buy it back—If the poor brother had sold himself

to be a slave, the near kinsman was to redeem him out of slavery—If he was murdered, the near kinsman was bound to avenge his blood on the murderer; and if he left a widow, however poor and encumbered with debt, the near kinsman, if unmarried, was to take her as his wife. As the shortness of my limits will not allow me to enter minutely into every remaining circumstance in the history. let it suffice to say, that Ruth, instructed by her mother-in-law, laid herself at the feet of Boaz, claiming him in the relation of her kinsman; and though it appeared there was a kinsman nearer than he, yet, as he was unable to buy back the inheritance of Elimelech, it devolved upon Boaz, who, in the presence of the elders of the people, in the gate of the city, publicly espoused Ruth the Moabitess, to be his wife; and she bare him a son, named Obed, from whom David the king descended, in whose line the blessed Redeemer conde-

scended to take our nature upon him, and to be born into this world for our salvation.

Thus wonderfully doth divine providence give completion to its merciful designs; nor are there any circumstances of distress so great from which the hand of the Lord cannot deliver his people; for, "his eyes are ever on the righteous, and his ears open to their cry," and they shall prove, "that godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Should these few pages fall into the hands of one of those unhappy characters, who, deaf to the prayers and counsels of his parents and friends, is still insolent and impatient under their kind remonstrances, let him, if yet capable of reflection, think on the end of a miserable Cain, a scoffing Ishmael, an ungodly Esau, and a rebellious Absalom; and view the striking contrast to such unhappy persons in the

example before us; in a Joseph, who was not ashamed to own his father in the court of Pharaoh, though he was a shepherd, and as such, an abomination in Egypt; in Samuel, Solomon, and Timothy, and above all in the Lord and Saviour of sinners, of whom it is said, "that he was subject unto Joseph and Mary." Believe me, the hour will come in which you will need the tender offices of sympathy, and how can that be expected from others, which you have denied to them?

Let me now close with calling your attention for a few moments to the near kinsman, as an eminent type of the Great Redeemer of our guilty souls.

1. Was the right of redemption in him? And could the inheritance only be redeemed at his cost? Does not this remind us of HIM, who came from heaven "to restore what he took not away," and at no less a price than his own blood, to

redeem that inheritance which we had forfeited by sin. Hence it was prophesied of him, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort all that mourn."

2. Did it pertain to the near kinsman, to avenge himself on the enemies of his brother? Herein we see the glorious end for which Jesus came into the world; for to this end he died, and rose, and revived, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and, having spoiled principalities and powers, make a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross. Again,

3. If the poor debtor had sold

himself as a slave, it was incumbent upon the near kinsman to redeem his person, as well as his inheritance. How beautifully expressive this of that day of God's power, in which the Divine Spirit raises the poor captive out of the pit in which there is no water; and by the blood of the covenant, imparts a liberty and peace to the conscience, which was unknown before! That being delivered out of the hands of his enemies, the ransomed sinner may henceforth, "serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of his life."

4. Did Boaz, the near kinsman, though a mighty man of wealth, condescend to espouse this poor stranger? How infinite the condescending love of Christ! Who redeemed poor perishing outcasts,* by his own blood, and by its application to their hearts, cleanses them from all their filthiness and their

* See Ezek. xvi.

idols; who clothes their naked souls with the spotless robe of his righteousness; who adorns them with the graces of his Holy Spirit, and adopts them into his family, as joint heirs with himself to all the blessings of his salvation in time and to eternity. Reader, art thou the happy partaker of these blessings? If not, may he stir thee up to "seek him while he may be found, and give thee grace to call upon him while he is near." - If thou art a subject of his grace, give him all the glory, and practically attend to his command, who says to thee, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

H Y M N.

By WILLIAM COWPER, Esq.

God moves in a mysterious way,
 His wonders to perform;
 He plants his footsteps in the sea,
 And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
 Of never-failing skill,
 He treasures up his bright designs,
 And works his sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
 The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy, and shall break
 In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
 But trust him for his grace;
 Behind a frowning providence
 He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
 Unfolding ev'ry hour;
 The bud may have a bitter taste,
 But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
 And scan his work in vain;
 God is his own interpreter,
 And he will make it plain.



